



Dring, dring, who's calling?

Most hotels still have landline phones in their rooms for clients to use. However, with guests increasingly owning a cell phone, will this remain true?

History of the Telephone^{1,2,3,4,5}

The word telephone comes from the Greek roots *tēle*, “far,” and *phonē*, “sound”. It was applied as early as the late 17th century to the string telephone familiar to children and was later used to refer to the megaphone and the speaking tube. In

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/technology/telephone>

² <https://www.elon.edu/u/imagining/time-capsule/150-years/back-1870-1940/>

³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Telephone>

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mobile_phone

⁵ <https://inventionland.com/blog/the-evolution-of-the-telephone/#:~:text=For%20starters%2C%20the%20first%20phone,catch%20on%20until%20the%201920s>

modern usage, it refers solely to electrical devices derived from the inventions of Alexander Graham Bell and others.

While Italian innovator Antonio Meucci invented the first basic phone in 1849, and Frenchman Charles Bourseuil devised a phone in 1854, Alexander Graham Bell won the first U.S. patent for the device in 1876.

In 1877-78, the first telephone line was constructed, the first switchboard created, and the first telephone exchange in operation. Three years later, almost 49,000 telephones were in use. In 1880, Bell merged with others to form the American Bell Telephone Company and in 1885 the American Telegraph and Telephone Company (AT&T) was formed; it dominated telephone communications for the next century. At one point, Bell employees intentionally denigrated the U.S. telephone system to drive down stock prices of all other phone companies and thus make it easier for Bell to acquire smaller competitors!!! By 1900 there were nearly 600,000 phones in Bell's telephone system; that number increased to 2.2 million by 1905, and 5.8 million by 1910.

Fast forward, the first handheld mobile phone was demonstrated by Martin Cooper of Motorola in New York City in 1973, using a handset weighing 2 kilos (4.4 lbs) 😊! In 1979, Nippon Telegraph and Telephone launched the world's first cellular network in Japan. In 1983, the DynaTAC 8000x was the first commercially available handheld mobile phone. By 1995, there were 25 million cellular phone subscribers and that number exploded at the turn of the century, with digital cellular phone services now replacing land-line phones for most clients.

From 1983 to 2014, worldwide mobile phone subscriptions grew to over seven billion, enough to provide one for every person on earth!

Fun Facts^{6,7}

- Bell's wife, Mabel, was deaf, and it is said that Bell grew interested in telecommunications to help his wife with her hearing. Bell's mother, Eliza, was also deaf and had to use a hearing trumpet.

⁶ <https://blog.ultatel.com/telephone-facts#>

⁷ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Telephone>

- ‘Hello’ is the common greeting we use when picking up the phone, but it wasn’t always that way. Bell suggested using “ahoy”. Thomas Edison (the inventor of the phonograph, motion picture camera, and early versions of the electric light bulb) was the one who suggested “hello.”
- At first, telephones were leased in pairs to a subscriber, who had to arrange for a telegraph contractor to construct a line between them, for example, between a home and a shop. Users who wanted to speak to several different locations would need to obtain and set up three or four pairs of telephones!

Telephones in Hotels^{8,9,10,11}

The first telephone call ever made in a hotel room was supposedly made by Bell in 1877 at London’s prestigious *Brown’s Hotel*. According to the hotel's official history, Bell arrived at the hotel carrying a large handbag full of futuristic equipment and attempted to make the call from the hotel’s front desk. As the messages carried by neighbouring wires interfered with the signal, Bell resolved to try again in the small hours of the morning. The attempt was successful, and – so the story goes – the first telephone call in the city was made, from Mayfair to Ravenscourt Park. A few years later, in 1894, *The Netherland Hotel* (New York city) introduced the first in-room telephones.

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, only the most upscale luxury hotels offered telephones to their guests, and it was typically a single wall phone in the lobby. A desk phone might also have been available to staff, with all calls being directed through an outside operator.

Today, the hotel telephone is still useful to guests in a number of ways:

- It is the primary means of communication between guests and hotel staff.

⁸ <https://www.jethotelsolutions.com/the-importance-of-the-hotel-phone/#:~:text=The%20hotel%20telephone%20is%20a,ensures%20accessibility%20for%20all%20guests>

⁹ <https://londonist.com/2014/08/londons-first-telephone-call-mayfair-to-ravenscourt-park>

¹⁰ <https://www.frommers.com/tips/hotel-news/hello-is-the-hotel-room-phone-still-there>

¹¹ <https://phonesuite.com/articles/a-history-of-hotel-phone-systems-2/#:~:text=Early%20Hotel%20Phone%20Systems&text=During%20the%20late%201800s%20and,directed%20through%20an%20outside%20operator.>

- In the event of an emergency, it is a lifeline. It enables guests to directly access 911 (the law require that hotel phone systems enable callers to directly dial 911 without the use of any prefix or access code).
- It can also be used to access information about hotel amenities and services or to get in-room (food) service or a wake-up call (God knows I need those sometimes 😊!).

However, hotels texting guests is something that has been percolating for a few years thanks to the rise of smartphones. Marriott International has enabled this feature within its mobile app, while other big hotel brands like Hilton, InterContinental Hotel Group, and Starwood Hotels, offer on-demand request functions through their own apps, too.

Surveys on the degree of cleanliness of various hotel objects show that the telephone is among the dirtiest, therefore the need for hotels to have efficient housekeepers. But with staff shortage, good housekeepers are increasingly difficult to come by.

This is why finding new means to attract and retain them, such as electronic tipping is a part of the solution 😊!

Francis Léonard CEO



The face behind your comfort

www-tip-go.com